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# *Sparrow in Search of Expulsion*

*Being the Plain Truth, now Revealed  
for the first time; of the efforts made by  
Thomas Whitcombe Shirley Sparrow  
to be Expelled  
from  
Castlegate School*

*Recorded by GUNBY HADATH*

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## *Contents*

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CHAP.	PAGE
I IN WHICH SPARROW WOULD CHANGE PLACES WITH CASABLANCA . . . . .	7
II THE PROOF DIRECT . . . . .	27
III SPARROW PUTS HIS FOOT DOWN ON PROFITEER- ING . . . . .	50
IV THE GREAT-AUNT AT HOLLOWFOOT . . .	71
V SIX—ONE—SEVEN—THR-RR-REEE CASTLEGATE	91
VI FIRMNESS AND SEVERITY . . . . .	115
VII SPARROW BECOMES A LANDED PROPRIETOR .	140
VIII PUT AND TAKE . . . . .	169
IX A CLEAN SWEEP . . . . .	191
X SQUARING ACCOUNTS . . . . .	215
XI SPARROW FOUNDS A NEW FIRM . . . . .	241
XII CATCHING THE HARE . . . . .	268
XIII BAD PENNIES . . . . .	294

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## *Chapter I*

### *In which Sparrow would Change Places with Casabianca*

IN the intervals of battling with indigestion, Mr. Eggett instructed Castlegate in mathematics, and, having concluded that, much as he loathed exercise, he must take a little lawn tennis this summer for his stomach's sake, he was studying the catalogue of a local outfitter with a view to the selection of flannel trousers, when he was interrupted by the appearance of Sparrow.

"Yes?" he inquired impatiently. "Did you knock?"

His visitor's reply was a gloomy "Yes, sir." He was a small youth whom you would not have looked at twice unless you had chanced to remark the freshness of his complexion, which was a singularly delicate pink and white, and his regularly fashioned eyebrows of light brown, so regular, indeed, that they might have been pencilled or gummed on. Having observed so far you would have gone on to be struck by the expression of melancholy which chastened his face.

"Well?" said Mr. Eggett.

"Sir," said Sparrow, with a rush, "I am not

happy. I am out of my element, sir, at Castlegate."

"A fish out of water, eh? And what is your grievance?"

"I think, sir," Sparrow answered, without animation, "that I should not feel comfortable at any school. I am not cut out, sir, for school life. It does not agree with me."

"Agree with you!" Mr. Eggett repeated sourly. "But why do you come to me with this silliness?"

"Because, sir, you are next in authority to the Head."

"You talk like a book, Sparrow. And what do you want me to do?"

"If you please, sir, I want you to ask the Head to expel me."

The words almost brought Mr. Eggett out of his chair, and, wondering if this were some new species of jest, he stared at the pink-and-white face, but its melancholy eyes met him squarely.

"And how long have you been here?" he asked at last.

"Sir, this is my third term!" was the dismal response.

"Your third term! Have you informed your parents of your feelings?"

"Yes, sir."

"And what do they say?"

Sparrow hesitated. "They say I have got to stick it. They won't remove me. That's why I have come to you."

"You think if I ask the Head——"

"Yes, sir," Sparrow broke in, his face at last eager. "You could easily tell the Head, sir, that I'm doing no good."

"Very easily," Mr. Eggett agreed dryly.

"Quite, sir. Then he'd take your advice and expel me. You might beg of him to expel me, sir. If you please, sir."

Mr. Eggett groaned and returned to his catalogue. "Run away and shake yourself down," he commanded. "You don't complain, I suppose, of your treatment here?"

"No, sir," said Sparrow, more lugubriously than before, and moved to the door, where for an instant he paused to cast one lingering and reproachful look over his shoulder.

As he took his dreary way he deliberated on the shortcomings of our system of education. That a fellow should be dumped down willy-nilly in a herd to do as the herd did or be smitten seemed an entire negation of free will. He began to schedule his day. "At seven in the morning," he said, "which is only six o'clock by the real time, I have to get up just when I am healthily asleep and jump into a tub most unhealthily cold. At half-past seven, on an empty stomach, I learn tripe by heart. At eight o'clock I munch what they call breakfast. From nine to twelve I am supposed to be interested in such tommyrot as the date of the Diet of Worms, and——" At

which instant the bell for prep. broke in discordantly.

He took his place at his desk beneath the high window, and resolved to make a last appeal to his people. He opened wide his Latin dictionary, and, building a little battlement or screen of books, drew out a fair sheet of foolscap, squared his elbows, and began.

His task when he had finished should have shown the Latin equivalent of that Eleventh Exercise of Arnold, which tells how some unnamed gentleman pretended that he had met the man who had killed the king by poison. But with Sparrow it read like this:—

DEAREST MOTHER,—

I write to tell you I am no better and my chest is very sore. I think it must be the air here and the chalk in the school water which ought to be boiled or filted but isn't i'm sure. I am very sorry I am costing you and father so much but I do not think school is any good. Willett, one of the fellows, borrowed my camera to make a musicle box and he can't make the inside fit again. I hope Mabel's cold is better. I am glad she is not at school. I think I have caught consumption. Will you send me a book called A Happy Sunset its all about a boy who got hit by a cricket ball and a disease set in and he died peacably. Its wonderful I don't get hit by a cricket ball so

many fellows smack them all over the shop at practice. I don't think the food is good but I should not mind if I was stronger. I will send you a piece of meat off the beef one day and you will see how stringy it is always like that. I hope you and father are well and won't mind my being so uncomfortable because I don't think I shall last long. Please send me some more money. None of the masters here can teach you properly, but old Eggett who does things called Surds is the worst I think. Please send me five shillings as I've lent three and six to Willett and I'll want some lozenges when my cough gets more hacking.

So absorbed had Sparrow been on his letter that he had been unconscious of a spare, angular figure which had stood behind him while he finished it off. Sparrow's first notification took the form of a sour command to show up his work.

Very readily Sparrow proffered his Arnold. Mr. Eggett waved it aside. Sparrow then handed his exercise-book and the dictionary. Mr. Eggett smiled grimly. Next, his lean fingers shot forth and grasped the foolscap, which, adjusting his glasses, he proceeded to read.

"Come with me," he commanded, when he had finished.

Back again in the study so recently left, Sparrow waited the issue quite placidly. He stood like a

Stoic, his pink-and-white features unpaled. Till all at once his pensive and melancholy eyes lit up with a gleam, as it occurred to him that his allusion to Mr. Eggett might do the trick, and induce the latter to demand his expulsion. What if he should secure by a mere fluke the boon which intercession had failed to wring?

"You are pleased to smile, Sparrow?"

"Sir, I didn't know I was smiling," said Sparrow.

"You go into prep——"

"The bell rang, sir, so I had to," Sparrow protested, in the tone of one rebutting a false accusation.

"Don't be impertinent. Impertinence won't help you. You go into prep., and, instead of doing your work, you write an alarming and libellous screed to your mother, every word of which is an utter falsehood."

"Willett did borrow my camera," said Sparrow, reproachfully.

Mr. Eggett fingered his beard with a tart smile. "And if it did not sound like abetting a felony, I would hope that he never returned your three shillings and sixpence."

"He won't, sir," said Sparrow.

Tearing the sheet of foolscap into fragments, Mr. Eggett flung them into his waste-paper basket. Then he bent over the outfitting catalogue on his blotting-pad, and blue-pencilled the block of the

flannels he had selected. He turned the pages, arriving at tennis rackets, and studied these ostentatiously for some minutes. He was giving himself time, as was his habit, to reflect what he should do with this extraordinary young person, who waited at a rigid and sombre attention.

"Don't stand like a vacuous image, Sparrow," he snapped. Then, after another pause: "To-morrow is Saturday."

Sparrow said nothing.

"Surds," said Mr. Eggett, "are not without attraction if you approach them, Sparrow, from the right view-point. To-morrow afternoon, then, when you have finished the Latin prose which you should have done this evening, you will try your 'prentice hand on Surds. See what you make of chapter thirty-four of Mr. Todhunter's nice

## II

On Saturday morning Mr. Eggett's indigestion was acute. It had never troubled him more. He dragged down to breakfast with the mien of a martyr, snapped at Mr. Campbell, who asked him to pass the toast, and swept a choleric way through morning school. This was doubly unfortunate, because the day was so beautiful that it might have moved him in a more equable frame to remove the ban of close confinement laid upon Sparrow in exchange for some healthier penalty. Indeed, towards twelve o'clock, and the end of third lesson, as great splashes of sunshine sprawled themselves over the desks, and through the open windows the birds sang their souls out, Mr. Eggett did permit his mind for one instant to dwell upon some alteration of sentence. A twinge of pain coincided, and hardened his heart.

The melancholy subject of his thoughts was nourishing no resentment. He accepted it as quite in the order of things that

He went that way to avoid the attentions of Willett, who, as experience taught him, would be seeking him in a few minutes to borrow a shilling. Willett generally did his borrowing on Saturdays. Here, at the end of the avenue under the trees, where the fellows came on home-match days to watch the road for their people who might turn up to see the cricket, he felt safe enough from Willett till dinner-time, because, as he never came here as a rule, Willett would not think of it till too late. He felt just a little tinge of almost happiness as he pictured Willett, desperate, searching for him. When suddenly he heard the mendicant's voice.

Willett had not seen him, but was calling, and undoubtedly approaching, as he could judge. Without a moment's hesitation, and with no one to gainsay, he slipped into the road and round the bend. The road was white, and it wound, and on either side the hedges were friendly and fragrant; and Sparrow went on. He had gone perhaps two hundred yards without meeting a soul, when he came to something which brought him up inquisitively.

So far, here was nothing at all arresting, but what puzzled Sparrow was why it was left to look after itself with a parcel so large that half was inside the carrier, and the other half propped up the lid.

A minute's examination answered his first question. One of the wheels had come off, and the errand boy, caught napping, had gone to Speakman's garage to fetch someone to replace it. So far, so bad. Sparrow felt sorry for the lad ; but whatever was in that enormously big parcel ? He sniffed at it, and fingered the twine gingerly.

Sparrow was inquisitive. He dwelt on that parcel, pressing its contour with the palms of his hands, till presently, after a hurried glance up and down, he made a hole in the paper and attached his eye. What he saw sent him back with a quick catch of breath ; but next moment he actually smiled, and sat down in the road.

First, was the parcel too heavy for him to carry? It was no good borrowing a thing he couldn't lug back; whereat he rose and extended his arms round the parcel. It was very light, and came easily to his embrace.

Next, could he cut back across the field and get the parcel safely into the School and his study? Well, the only way to answer this question was to try it, and, seeing no signs of the errand boy, off he set. What Sparrow's mental make-up lacked in sociability it appears to have found in a talent for quick decision, and if he was not gregarious, he was brisk. Fortune favours the brave, and it favoured Sparrow.

Ten minutes later the door of his study was bolted, and behind it he was undoing a large package, rejoicing that a chill had removed Hebblethwaite to the sick-room, and so given him undivided possession of their quarters.

because grey kept clean longer and cost no more ; but he kept an open mind on the brand of racket, which he would leave to Brackell & Sons to select for him. He would want white canvas shoes, too, he reflected, and—yes, a belt or sash, he supposed, for his waist. He would like School colours, of course, but as he had never yet played a game he felt a little shy of adopting the School sash.

So presently he found the outfitting catalogue, and reached for his hat in that pleasurable anticipation which is quite the best part of setting out to buy things. It occurred to him then that if he went by the terrace he would pass the window of Sparrow's study, and could glance through the pane to see the young man at his Surds. No idea of freeing the captive remained in his mind as he strode off, wondering if lawn tennis was really a hard game.

His feet were presently crushing the gravel by the terrace, but their crunch did not disturb the rigid

gotten, at peace with the world, in the avenue we leave Mr. Eggett; to hasten ahead in pursuit of a small figure which, immediately dinner was over, had dashed away, and had now been in the town quite twenty minutes. We come up with Sparrow at a pastrycook's, whence he emerged removing flakes of three-corner from his lips, and grateful that Willett had not secured his last shilling. Thence he crossed the road by the post office, and nosed for a while the window where they sell fishing-tackle, before turning to the establishment at the corner which bore the legend, "G. Brackell & Sons, Outfitters."

Sparrow paused and regarded the plate-glass windows. One in the side street was occupied entirely by boots—black boots, brown boots, buttoned boots, buckskin boots, all kinds of boots. But the other and larger window, which faced the High Street, displayed the wide range of Brackell & Sons' summer suitings, the excellence of their gentlemen's ready-made suits, the style with economy of their bespoke tailoring, and the readiness

whom he addressed—and whose face revealed good nature if a face ever did—that certainly he could *not* see Mr. Brackell, unless he followed him to a happier world, but that he was speaking to Mr. Brackell's unworthy successor, who assured him of his best attention at all times, coupled with the widest range in suitings, Sparrow broke the peroration to inquire *why* a blank space had been left in the window.

The face of Mr. Brackell & Sons fell at once, and he indicated a red-eyed youth at the counter.

“Because,” he replied, “that careless lout loses my property.”

“Yes?” said Sparrow, inquiringly. “How interesting!”

"When I've found it," said Mr. Brackell & Sons.

"Oh, you've lost it, then. Did it jump from the train?"

A plump but accusing thumb was jerked at the shop boy, whose red eyes were now bent over a box of ties. "Ask him!" growled the finger's owner. "He fetched it from the station. It jumped out of his carrier somewhere or other."

"But perhaps," said Sparrow, gently, "it's only borrowed."

The successor of the departed Mr. Brackell passed his fingers between his collar and neck and gracefully flicked the moisture on to the floor. "It's hot!" he explained, "the hottest day that we've had. Borrowed my lay figure! What do you mean?"

but he kept his mouth open, and riveted his eyes on Sparrow's pink cheeks, on his regularly pencilled eyebrows, and pink complexion.

"By gum!" he exclaimed, "you're like a waxwork yourself! No offence, but I've never seen anything nearer. In my window there, in a blazer and a cap and white bags, I'd defy them to detect the difference if you kept still." He called the pink-eyed youth. "What say, Joe?" he said. "Shall we put him in the window to pay him back?"

It is likely that our outfitter spoke in jest. But Sparrow, as has been seen, was a man of brisk mind, who rarely wasted time on thinking twice. And scarcely had the words left the other's lips than Sparrow, without the slightest change of expression, removed his coat and waistcoat, and, unbuttoning his collar, remarked:—

remains that a minute or two afterwards he returned to the counter carrying a stiff and motionless figure, the legs whereof projected rigidly, and the head of which was crowned in a green cricket cap. For the rest, it was clad in a blazer of vivid scarlet, a blue-and-white shirt, white flannels immaculately creased and maintained by a snake-belt, and a pair of buckskin boots.

In this guise they deposited Sparrow in the window, in the little island in its sea of suitings and raiment, and from the wrist of one of his bent arms they hung a card which stated in gilt lettering :—

EVERY REQUISITE FOR SPORT.

*Unsurpassed Quality.*

Then Mr. Brackell in his shirt-sleeves stooped before him, and crossed his other

and run amuck. But he held on bravely, standing as stiff as iron, his chin well up, his dismal features rigid. It is not surprising that a prim old lady, having paused to regard him severely on her way to the dressmaker, declared to that functionary while presently being tried-on that she'd just seen the miserablest dummy in Brackell's window ! "As a rule, my dear," she explained, "they make 'em too simpering."

Brackell's new figure certainly was not simpering. True, it seized its chance directly the old lady had passed to scratch its nose, across which a fly was strolling, but this brought no relief to its pained features. Eyes straight ahead, it reflected on Casabianca and wondered if his deck was as hot as the window ?

of serving "the college," which has its official suppliers of colours in London, so he handled Mr. Eggett with reverence, and strewed his counter with all the hues of the rainbow.

"And the next, if you please, sir?" he said, ere the parcel was packed.

"Oh, a lawn-tennis racket," said Mr. Eggett. He paused to cough nervously. "I am—er—a trifle rusty—out of practice, you know—so I will ask you to select the racket for me. I rely on your judgment."

"Couldn't rely on a better, sir, though I say it myself. Joe, my lad, what do I know about tennis rackets?"

"All that's worth knowing," responded the untruthful Joe.

His employer led to the door. "Step this way, sir," he said. "I've a show of this season's rackets in the window, and I'd like you——"

But there he stopped short, for recollection rushed over him. In the excitement of serving this august customer he had forgotten his latest model in window dummies. And, being a kindly soul, he was prompted at once to arrest an inspection which must reveal the truth.

"One moment, sir!" he implored. "Joe, did you move those rackets out of the window?"

"Aye!" Joe cried, immediately; this time *splendide mendax*.

"Where did we move 'em to, Joe?"

But Joe, though he could second a fib well, was not of the inventive faculty. He scratched his head, and looked at his master appealingly, before murmuring something which sounded like "The coal cellar."

"Well, never mind," said Mr. Eggett, kindly. "But I dare say you have one or two left in the window."

And before they could reply he swung briskly out of the door, and halted before the exhibition of suitings.

His eye roved them till it caught the racket, clasped in the stiff embrace of the agonized dummy, staring with vacant gaze above his head. It tingled, and distinctly felt its spine creep, the consequence of shock rather than alarm. And its neighbour, the ready-made suit, smelled fustier than ever.

Mr. Eggett allowed his eyes to lift to its face. At which instant its mouth and nose began to twist, and it sneezed.

\* \* \* \* \*

"And now," inquired Mr. Eggett that evening, "did you leave the real dummy in your study to deceive me if I glanced in?" As he spoke he restored his cane to the cupboard.

"Not quite, sir," said Sparrow, blowing upon his palms. "But it sort of looked nice there."

"Well, tell me what possessed you to play such a prank?"

Sparrow eyed him drearily, and when he replied it was in the pious tone of depressed resignation. "Because, sir," he said, "I thought I might get expelled."

Mr. Eggett's indigestion was certainly better. "Ah," he said lightly, "you must try again, Sparrow."

## *Chapter II*

## *The Proof Direct*

TO Mr. Eggett the whole idea was abominable. That at his time of life, and with his digestion, he should be called upon to inaugurate and take for two hours every week a class upon business subjects (he declined flatly to term them "commercial") seemed the height of the inappropriate and the unkind; inappropriate, because he knew nothing about business, and unkind because there were younger men on the staff. But to his courteous hints in that direction the Head had turned a bland, unresponsive countenance; reflecting no doubt that by his virtues as an arithmetician Mr. Eggett was as well qualified as, for instance, the games master, to teach business, and that in bringing a virgin mind to the task he would be no more handicapped than would anyone else. So Mr. Eggett groaned gently, and shouldered his burden with all that courage that had animated him—alas! unavailingly—to begin lawn tennis as a cure for indigestion.

Thus, in deference to the spirit of the age, Castlegate, conservative of conservatives, had broken with tradition by means of a class wherein every Friday morning from ten to twelve some fifteen to twenty monarchs (in embryo) of industry groped among the mysteries of bills of lading, and drafts at ninety days' sight, and kindred *arcana*. The circumstance that a prize was attached at term's end for the best commercial paper formed very possibly a minute attraction beside the opportunities offered to enterprise. It was not that the Germs (as the class became known) were really sanguine of passing, *viâ* cultivation by Mr. Eggett, to the immediate management of banks and big companies, but because novelty will always repay pursuit, and there were reasons to anticipate compensations.

Of course, Willett lost no time in enrolling as a Germ, for he knew that business has to do with borrowing money, and panted to learn in how

"trial balance"; but all it showed, with ten minutes more to go, was an exclamation mark and a couple of blots. At our sufferer's right lay *Lyons on Book-keeping*; in front of him Grove's *Discount and Interest Tables*; on his left the assiduous Willett making audible additions, and behind him the lean shadow of Mr. Eggett.

"But, Sparrow," remarked the latter with some emphasis, "I spent all last lesson explaining a trial balance to you!"

"Yes, sir," said Sparrow.

“Reports about me, sir,” Sparrow said, proffering them.

As Mr. Eggett glanced through the papers he groaned. Here was a cheerless symposium of adverse reports from sundry masters on the attainments of Sparrow. It appeared that he was going from bad to worse; that his inattention was gross and his ignorance inexplicable; that he was idle, careless, and, to be quite brief, a pattern of everything the student should not be. It occurred to Mr. Eggett, as he read on, that Sparrow, on his unresting quest for removal, had hit upon a method more veiled and subtle than any he had yet employed.

“So!” he remarked at last. “These make sorry reading.”

“They do, indeed, sir,” said Sparrow.

Sparrow regarded him thoughtfully, weighing his answer. "Sir," he said at last, "I told you this morning. The food disagrees with me. I am wasting away. My brain is getting no nourishment. I ought to go home. Moreover, sir, my only chance of learning is with a private tutor. A class distracts me."

"What a pity!" said Mr. Eggett, dryly. "Well, a *précis* is nourishing for the brain. So by to-morrow night you will write me a *précis* on the first chapter of any book that you like. You know what a *précis* is?"

Sparrow's reply was a wince. Had not Mr. Eggett recently set the fashion of substituting *précis*-writing for the old-fashioned impot, and did not he, Sparrow, number among Castlegate's miseries the

wherewith to turn his arch enemy out of his trenches. And now for the *n*th time he believed he had found it at last in that widely advertised specific "Digesto," which, if you took the word of Digesto, Ltd., banished indigestion well nigh at a glance. There stood the new arrival among the deposed, rearing its proud head in a wrapping of amber and gold, which on removal revealed a pamphlet of testimonials wound round it in the fashion of swaddling clothes. Each testimonial told of some sufferer cured, and Mr. Eggett felt his pulses quickening as he uncorked the bottle and helped himself liberally. Then he sat down to read through every one of the testimonials; in which congenial pursuit it would never have occurred to him that Sparrow that instant was likening him to a frying-pan.

Yet so it was. For on leaving his room Sparrow had stepped straight into the arms of Willett, who immediately launched overtures for a loan. And as Willett regarded Sparrow as a species of

"You're a liar," said Willett.

"I mean you've promised to pay me back before, and you haven't done. You owe me four-and-ninepence already."

"Then that will make seven-and-three," said Willett readily. "And look here, Sparrow, if you're nervous about getting it back, I'll give you a debenture for it. There!" And Willett looked very sage, and rubbed his large hands.

Here was first fruit indeed of learning imbibed by the Germs! In his zeal for mastering all the methods of borrowing, Willett had discovered one royal road, namely, that when you wanted money badly you issued a debenture—and there you were!

subjects for the Home Civil is *précis* writing. So he wrote one the other day for his coach, who was so bucked with it that he cracked it up tremendously, which made my brother so bucked that he sent it home to the governor, who sent it to me——”

“I see,” said Sparrow. “Like the house that Jack built.”

“I don’t know what you mean, you funny ass. But writing English has always run in our family, so the governor sent it to me to study as a model. And what I mean, old man, is this: you lend me half a crown, and I’ll issue my brother’s *précis* to you as a debenture. It’s yours till I pay you back. That’s what I mean.”

money, he inquired what the précis was all about.

"As if I knew!" exclaimed Willett. "I haven't looked at it."

But he was away and back in a flash with the masterpiece, which turned out to be a condensation of Chapter I of *Graft's Manual of Psychology*, and as Sparrow had been given a free hand, and had no idea at all what psychology was, a better subject could not have presented itself, and the bargain now assumed a more serious aspect.

"But, Willett," he said, "you owe me four-and-nine. Here's two bob and six ha'penny stamps. That makes seven bob."

(perhaps to secure the one court before Mr. Fleetwood), and it was Sparrow's amiable design to thwart him by presenting both himself and his purchase before his taskmaster could start to change. So the latter was barely back in his room ere Sparrow was there also, clothed in an engaging simplicity, and begging attention for the *précis* he had brought.

"You told me to bring it to you to-day, sir," he lisped.

"I said this evening, Sparrow. I said this evening, distinctly."

"But I knew you'd be glad if I could get it done before, sir."

"Fudge!"

"It has cost me so much, sir."

"Cost you so much?"

"So much trouble, sir, and so much time; and I'm very anxious to hear what you think of it, sir."

"But you did not suppose I should read it now?"

"Yes, sir, I did, sir. Knowing how fond you are of *précises*."

"The plural of *précis* isn't *précises*, Sparrow. And I've got to change."

smoothed out the foolscap sheets. Then at once his face grew stern and his mouth hardened. Successful surprises should be not only immediate, but patent ; and the surprise which Sparrow had sprung responded to both these tests.

He had indeed struck a new line. Never in the course of Mr. Eggett's long experience at Castle-gate had any boy ventured to show up a typewritten imposition. But here was this *précis* fresh from the throbbing brain of Willett, of Caius, dressed by Sparrow's industrious fingers in a new garb, precisely typed with a neat and beautiful margin. Mr. Eggett, be it repeated, had never known anything so audacious in his career.

He closed the window with a vicious click, and made as if to tear the *pr*

remarked. "On purpose, I opine, to play tricks like this?"

"Oh, no, sir," said Sparrow, in a faint, tired tone. "I'm in a decline, sir, and I got it to make my will on."

"I see," murmured Mr. Eggett, not rising to the bait; and paused, and threw the window wide again, admitting each happy sound from the outer world. "Well, Sparrow, you were very anxious to come up after dinner. Now you are here you shall stay. Go and fetch your machine."

"My bicycle," said Sparrow at once. "Very good, sir."

"Don't say 'Very good, sir,'—you're not a butler

"Sparrow," said Mr. Eggett, almost lightly, for his anger had evaporated while he changed, "you will remain here and type me another précis till call-over. Now, what subject shall we choose? For you have not much brains, so we must——"

"Sir, I've done one on psy—psychology!" Sparrow put in.

But Mr. Eggett had not been born yesterday. Perfectly aware from the glimpse he had taken that Sparrow's typewritten impertinence had dealt with a subject of which he had no knowledge whatsoever, he was not to be drawn into any immediate attempt to probe the source of Sparrow's inspiration, or the depths of his ignorance. That discussion was shelved till more opportune moments.

"Well, Sparrow," he said,

"Now, you see this pamphlet, Sparrow? It contains copies of letters, very grateful and encouraging letters, I may say, from people this medicine has cured. Perhaps the Castlegate food will agree with you better when you have summarized for me these grateful testimonials. In any event, you shall try, Sparrow; you shall try."

"You mean, sir, you want me to make a précis of these letters?"

"Your brain is improving already. Yes, I do, Sparrow. You will make the best job you can of it, type your result, and show it to me when I ask you for it."

"Not before, sir?" lisped Sparrow.



work, and the first notices of it, would appear. Glowing with that healthy anticipation with which every author regards the reviewers' notices, Mr. Eggett took his place with his business disciples.

Doubtless the London papers reach Castlegate normally, but they are not brought up to the School till eleven o'clock, and accordingly Mr. Eggett must curb his impatience for the opinions expressed on his work by the critics. In the meantime he was radiating a steady cheerfulness, and when Willett, having fixed him with basilisk eye, inquired what happened to a debenture that was not redeemed, he traced that instrument's career from cradle to coffin before reverting to the point where they had left off last week. "We were discussing, you will remember, a trial balance, and showed how it is the bedrock of all true accounts."

Sparrow, upon whom his glance fell as he spoke, created considerable surprise by the briskest "Just so, sir."

“But suppose, sir, you didn’t want your debenture back?”

Mr. Eggett looked puzzled. “If you,” he demurred, “borrowed money (which, of course, you never do, Willett, I’m sure) and issued, as we term it, a debenture, you would pay interest on the loan until paid off, or forfeit the property secured by debenture. If that is what you mean——”

“But suppose that it’s not Willett’s property originally, sir? And suppose that, anyhow, it’s not worth what he borrowed?” This from Sparrow, most astonishingly again evincing a hot and unwonted interest in the subject, that drew every eye in amazement to him.

went on, beaming round the class, "a really remarkable effort from our friend Sparrow. It is a little précis which he wrote for me last week, and it deals quite brilliantly with a recondite subject."

Up shot Willett's arm, but Mr. Eggett dodged it, bent upon no more expositions of debentures.

"Sparrow selected psychology, and Mr. Graft's excellent manual; that is to say, the first chapter of that pleasant work. An extremely able chapter, as we all agree, and a more than able summary by our friend Sparrow. He was telling us last week that his brain was ill-nourished. Here we have very direct evidence to the contrary." Mr. Eggett had folded the belauded sheets, and now beckoned Sparrow up to receive them back. "There, keep it, Sparrow. I have

shall find—er—some review notices.” And here the good man tried to look unconcerned and as if he were not burning with eagerness.

Off went Drinkwater like a torpedo from its tube, for nothing could have suited the Germs better than to search the papers for notices of “our” book instead of splitting the head over profit and loss. And when the emissary returned with an armful, every one saving Sparrow strained at the leash, urging to be allowed to conduct the search.

Perhaps with an eleventh-hour diffidence, Mr. Eggett did not retain a paper for himself, but leaned beaming over his desk, awaiting results, while nothing was heard for a while but the crisp rustling as eager fingers turned from sheet to sheet. Then Drinkwater nudged Carr and drew his attention to something at which they stared with startled eyes, and next the restless hand of Wil

But nobody answered, and nobody made a move, so he stepped from his desk and took the first paper that offered, leisurely adjusting his glasses the while. In a silence that could be felt every Germ looked at Sparrow.

Mr. Eggett read on with lowering brow. What he read was not to be missed had you tried to miss it. It hit you in the face as you turned the sheet. Not a notice, this, of *Eggett on Surds*, but a photograph of Sparrow looking his forlornest, every doll-like feature exact; with a wide Eton collar; perhaps Sparrow as he appeared some two years ago. And beside and beneath this stupefying apparition a letterpress in blatant and shrieking type:—

### BRAINS AND BRILLIANCE!



"You did it last Saturday afternoon, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir. It was my précis of the testimonials. There were bits précied from each of them. The bit about loss of concentration is from a letter——"

"That will do. The names you used were not in the testimonials."

"Well, sir. I couldn't think how to précis names."

Mr. Eggett stooped at his cupboard, and returned, drawing between his fingers the lithest of canes. "And do you appreciate, Sparrow, that you forged my name?"



































































































































































































































































































































































































































































































































































